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DCI TASK FORCE
CHINA-VIETNAM-USSR
23 February 1979

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SITUATION REPORT No. 15
(as of 1430)

The Military Situation

A major battle appears to be in the offing in the northeast, and recent reporting suggests the massive Chinese military buildup there may be even larger than we believed. A new Chinese offensive may be in the cards in the northwest around Lao Cai. (SS)

The Chinese have elements of four armies along Vietnam's northeastern border--the 41st, 42nd, 43rd, and 55th. These armies have 12 infantry divisions, as well as supporting armored, field artillery, and air defense artillery units. The Chinese have conserved their forces. [REDACTED] large concentrations of forces on the Chinese side of the border near Lang Som. [REDACTED]

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State Department review completed

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Chinese Political Activity

Chinese officials and diplomats are giving somewhat conflicting versions of the expected length of the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. While most of them continue to insist that the military action will be "short" in duration, some are now indicating that this will depend upon the Vietnamese military reaction. [redacted]

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[redacted] said the PRC's objectives could be accomplished in "ten days or so" unless the Vietnamese undertook a strong counterattack. [redacted] took even a stronger stand, stating that the Chinese intention was to inflict "significant military damage" on Vietnam, by which he said he meant the elimination of five to ten Vietnamese divisions as effective fighting units. Only then would China be willing to negotiate. Other Chinese sources have claimed that three Vietnamese paramilitary divisions have already been destroyed. [redacted]

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[redacted] stated that, because it would be difficult to bring the Vietnamese to the negotiating table, it was likely that fighting would continue "for a long time." [redacted]

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Vietnam on Negotiations

Beijing continues to call for bilateral negotiations to settle border related issues, a call which Hanoi initially rejected flatly. A press report from Japan, however, claims the Vietnamese ambassador in Tokyo told Japanese Foreign Minister Sonoda that Vietnam would enter into peace talks with China if China would "immediately pull out its forces." There have been hints that the Vietnamese were softening their position on negotiations, and this report, if confirmed, would represent a major shift in the Vietnamese stand. [redacted]

Other Reaction

Contrary to yesterday's press reporting, the UK today "categorically denied" that the Chinese incursion has led to a suspension of negotiations for the sale of Harrier aircraft to China. [redacted]

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Soviet Political Reaction

Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov called the Soviet government statement of last Sunday a "major political document" containing a "serious warning" to China. Speaking to an electoral meeting in Minsk, Ustinov referred to Beijing's actions against Vietnam as an "open and impudent challenge to all mankind."

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This makes Ustinov's second statement on the conflict inside 24 hours, following his order of the day for Soviet armed forces day that appeared in all Soviet newspapers. The latest speech mentions neither the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty nor US policy toward the conflict. Ustinov's declaration that the "battle readiness of the USSR armed forces is at a high level" is not in itself unusual.

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A Chinese diplomat in Moscow told a US Embassy Officer yesterday that the Chinese Embassy has had no official contact with the Soviets since 17 February. Brezhnev's expected return to Moscow from Sochi may yield a more decisive leadership statement, according to the Chinese official. The Chinese embassy has observed no dramatic signs of increased Soviet military activity, he added; the diplomat noted the possibility that Moscow might eventually launch a "short, sharp" cross-border attack, probably in Xinkiang, but doubted that the Soviets would seek to hold territory and stated that in any case, China was prepared

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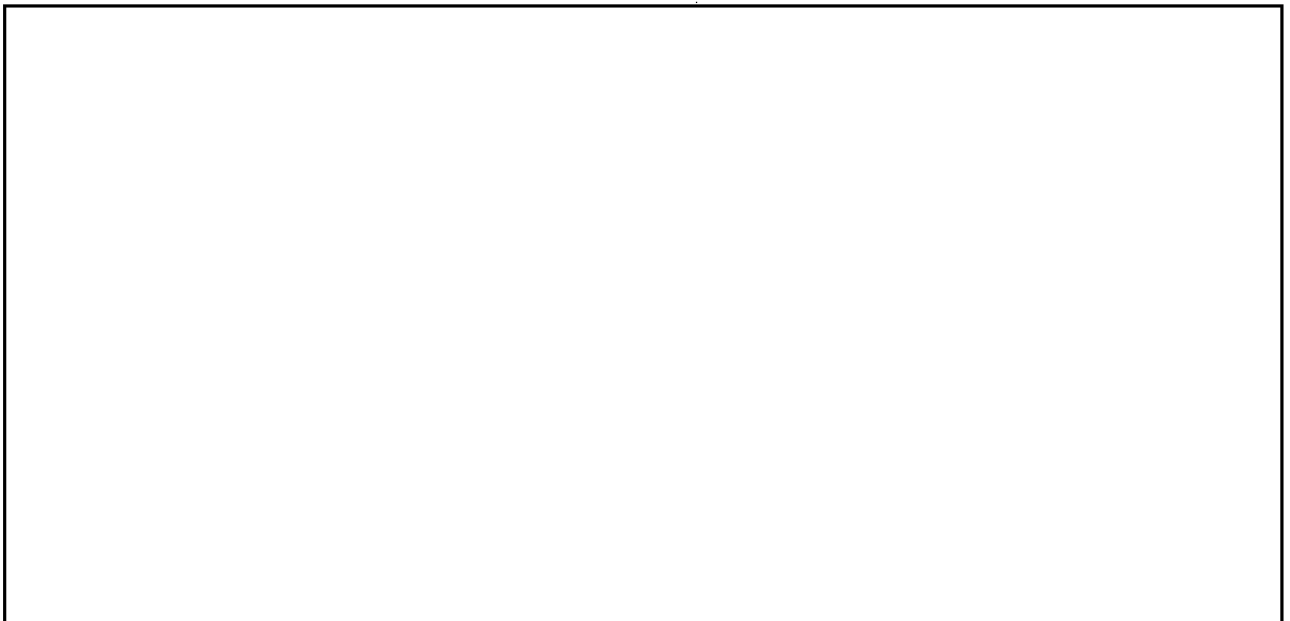
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for any such move. The Chinese diplomat reported that there had been a small but unruly demonstration at the embassy the previous evening; when the demonstrators were reminded that a Soviet ambassador still resided in Beijing, they refrained from painting any more "insulting" graffiti on the embassy wall.

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Soviet Bloc Military Developments



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